

South Downs

Local Access Forum

16 February 2017, 10.30am, at the South Downs Centre, Midhurst

Members Present: Andy Hannaford AH, Bob Damper BD, Glynn Jones GJ, John Vannuffel JV, Karen Roberts KR, Richard Johnson RJ, Roger Mullenger RM, Russell Cleaver RC, Simon James SJ, Susan Thompson ST, Val Bateman VB, Robert Whitcombe RW

Apologies: Isabel Swift, Neville Harrison, Nick Taylor, Sue Dunkley.

SDNPA Officers In attendance Allison Thorpe AT – SDNPA Access & Recreation Lead, Andrew Lee AL – SDNPA Director of Countryside & Policy Management, Andy Gattiker AG - SDW National Trail Lead,

Apologies: Nigel James NJ – Countryside & Policy Manager

Minute Taker: Sara Osman SO, Support Services Officer, SDNPA

Guest Speakers: Jane Noble (WSCC)

Observers: Sarah Rayfield (British Horse Society); Val Rawlings (Hampshire & Sussex Disabled Ramblers); Bob McLellan (Hampshire & Sussex Disabled Ramblers); Alan Marlow (Ramblers & HCAF); Tricia Butcher (WSLAF); Andy Beattie (SDNPA); Dan Oakley (SDNPA)

A. Welcome and Minutes

1. Welcome

RM welcomed everyone to the meeting, including welcoming Andrew Lee back. Apologies were accepted from Isabel Swift, Neville Harrison, Nick Taylor, Sue Dunkley & Nigel James. David Taylor has resigned. There have been 3 vacancies to the SDLAF, two of which have been filled, as detailed in Item 10.

2. Minutes of the last meeting and matters arising

The minutes were accepted as correct except for the following correction:

- It was agreed to reword “All actions from previous meeting had been completed except the following” to “Actions from the previous meeting had been completed, as detailed below”.

All actions from previous meeting were completed. Updates were received on the following actions:

- Action 1: Busses bill update – the consultation is now open and the deadline for responses is 21March 2017 (<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/bus-services-bill-draft-regulations-and-guidance>). RJ outlined the pros and cons of the proposed bill and it was agreed that RJ and AT will draft a response.

A reply had also been received from HCC Highways to our letter regarding the flooding at Stocks lane on the Meon Valley Trail (Re. ACTION 10 from meeting of 20 July 16). The response was not satisfactory and did not resolve the issue. AT will follow up with HCC after they have inspected the site in the ‘drier months’ and report back to SDLAF.

ACTION 1: RJ and AT will draft a response to the Buses bill consultation.

ACTION 2: AT to follow up conditions on Stocks Lane on the Meon Valley Trail with HCC highways and report back to SDLAF.

B. Key Topics for Discussion

3. National Trail update (Andy Gattiker)

AG [updated](#) the group on National Trails. The expected 50% cut in funding to National Trail maintenance budgets for the coming financial year will now not go ahead and they have had confirmation that they will receive full funding for the next year. This is a great sign of the commitment of the Government, however it is still unclear what funding will be provided in the future and the family of National Trail Partnerships have been discussing different options for working in the future. AG has organised a Logical Framework meeting for National Trail stakeholders on 20 February to clarify key actions and the direction the group should proceed.

In response to a question about whether National Trails could become integrated as part of the ROW network, AG answered that the funding National Trails bring delivers a lot of maintenance work that may not be available if included as parts of the ROW network and maintenance of the paths would suffer. The National Trail received £87K from Defra, nearly all of which is used to maintain the trail. SDLAF members suggested there could be an opportunity to identify other income streams from National Trails such as donations or sales of merchandise.

ACTION 3: AG will report back to SDLAF from February Logical Framework workshop for National Trails on 20 Feb. **SO** to put on the next agenda.

4. Coast Path: Maps of proposed routes for the England Coast Path in the SDNPA (Andy Gattiker)

AG updated the group on the England Coast Path which will be completed in 2020. AG led the group through a series of [slides](#) showing the preferred route along the south coast which passes through parts of the SDNP.

Natural England have asked key authorities to state their preferred routes first, which should attempt to use existing paths where possible aiming for a single, unified route. There will be engagement with landowners where the route passes in Spring/ Summer 2017, which will be followed by a formal consultation.

The maps showed the preferred routes from Eastbourne to Beachy Head, at Birling Gap, Seven Sisters, Newhaven and from Newhaven to Brighton. AG asked for feedback from SDLAF. In response to a question about increased health and safety risk to public with more paths close to cliff edge, AG assured Members that the Government have reduced risk for landowners who are not liable, and will not have to put up and maintain fences close to cliff edges. All land surrounding the coastal path will be open access land.

ACTION 4: SDLAF to prepare response to the England Coast Path consultation later in the year.

5. Auditing Lists of Streets (Roger Mullenger)

The British Horse Society (BHS) have asked that all LAFs take steps to ensure that unsealed highways used as part of the access network are not removed from the List of Streets maintained by highways authorities. The 'list of streets' is maintained by every highway authority under the Highways Act 1980. It stipulates that every council should keep an up-to-date list of the streets within their area which are highways maintainable at the public expense. RM summarised an [online discussion](#) by other LAFs.

Some LAFs are discussing this further but not all, and RM asked the group whether they felt the SDLAF should be taking an active role in discussing and feeding back views. Alan Marlow stated that the Hampshire Countryside Access Forum (HCAF) have been looking at this and that Hants ROW maps now clearly identify these unsealed highways on their online maps. The Hampshire forum would welcome input from SDLAF.

Jane Noble from WSCC stated that they have consulted with Highways on this issue who assured that no unsealed highways would be deleted without full consultation with LAF groups. It was suggested that the SDLAF should write to highways authorities in the Park to get clarification on what they are doing in relation to unsealed highways and ask what their actions are on their lists of streets.

ACTION 5: RM to draft letter to highways authorities in the park to get clarification on what they are doing in relation to unsealed highways and what their actions are on their lists of streets.

ACTION 6: SO to add Auditing Lists of Streets & unsealed highways to agenda of next meeting

6. WSCC ROWIP (Jane Noble)

JN summarised the background to the [WSCC ROW Improvement plan](#) which is now being reviewed. It will link to the WSCC and SDNPA Walking and Cycling strategies. WSCC were keen to give this opportunity for SDLAF to input into the Improvement Plan. The SDLAF were asked to input their views on questions about access and barriers to the countryside in West Sussex. JN then asked for suggestions on what the WSCC ROW team should focus on achieving in the next 10 years. This is a preliminary phase of gathering information from stakeholders prior to going out to public consultation in spring. After this consultation it will go for approval by WSCC cabinet members. JN captured views of the SDLAF in response to these questions and asked the group to prioritise the items that were captured. JN will feed the comments and suggestions back to WSCC ROW team.

C. Updates

7. Countryside Stewardship permissive paths Update (Bob Dampner)

BD gave a verbal update from the sub group which met in January to discuss results of Permissive Paths surveys. The group looked at the maps and the range of comments for each path and had some issues identifying some of the paths. Out of 74 paths on list they managed to identify 59 on maps and graded them on basis of feedback from the path reviews. The majority of paths were graded as important and necessary and many paths are well used and enjoyed by the public. The LAF concluded that the Permissive Paths programme had been a success.

AT asked the group to agree the next steps and whether the SDLAF should approach landowners, as there is an opportunity to work with Estate landowners who are currently working with SDNPA staff on whole estate plans. Landowner members agreed that it was important to contact landowners and a letter would be appropriate. It was suggested to ask landowners on how onerous or easy maintenance of the paths has been, or any benefits the paths have given, with view to getting landowners views on the continuation of paths in future. It was agreed that the next steps for the working sub group would be to contact landowners, and it was suggested that the SDLAF should also contact local rambler groups for input into importance of the paths.

ACTION 7: RM to draft a letter to landowners regarding Permissive Paths for approval from sub group before sending out. **Sub Group** to contact local Rambler groups to ask for feedback on permissive paths in their area.

ACTION 8: SO to aid the Permissive Paths sub group in agreeing a date for next meeting

8. Devil's Dyke Path Project (Glynn Jones)

GJ outlined a [consultative paper](#) from the National Trust setting out an outline proposal to improve pedestrian user access from Devils Dyke junction to The Dyke. A purpose built leisure / cycle pathway, known as 'Sustrans 82', runs parallel with Devils Dyke Road from the main roundabout (near A27) but ends abruptly at the T-junction adjacent the Dyke Golf course and does not extend to the Devils Dyke car park. The proposal seeks agreement to upgrade and improve the track up to the hard standing area adjacent the Devils Dyke pub car park by bringing it up to a standard consistent with the lower Sustrans 82 path.

SDLAF members viewed a map of the proposed path and discussed the proposal in full. AG added that the proposed path makes a good connection to the SDW which runs close to the route. It was agreed that the SDLAF strongly support this scheme and it will add value to the national trail.

ACTION 9: GJ to report back to the National Trust that the SDLAF agreed that they strongly support the Devils Dyke proposed path and that it will add value to the National Trail.

ACTION 10: SDLAF to write a letter in support of the Devil's Dyke Path Project plan

9. SDNPA Cycling and Walking Strategy (Alister Linton-Crook)

ALC ran through a [presentation](#) on the SDNPA cycling and Walking Strategy for 2017-27, which has strong links to the SDNPA Sustainable Tourism strategy. ALC set out background and context of the strategy. Informal discussions are currently being held with Local Highways Authorities and other key organisations to identify issues and links to other strategies. A draft document will be available in March 2017 to be followed by an informal consultation with key user groups.

There is a two-fold vision: to look at infrastructure and linkage, and to create a welcoming culture for cycling and walking. The strategy will focus on cycling and walking for leisure, and will look at different user groups with specific requirements (e.g. mountain bikers, accessible routes). The primary group the strategy is aimed at is 'occasional walkers & cyclists', with the aim of encouraging them to become frequent users. The secondary group it will be aimed at are non-active people (to encourage them to become occasional or frequent users) and also frequent users (to encourage them to use a wider area).

ALC detailed the strategy framework and objectives and likely funding streams to support the strategy. A key aim is to create long distance routes which will link different transport hubs (e.g. train stations) which will encourage easy access to countryside from and between key transport hubs.

ACTION 11: SDLAF members to feed back any comments on the SDNPA Cycling and Walking Strategy to Alister Linton-Crook

10. Chairs Update (Roger Mullenger)

- **Member Appointments:** Reappointment letters have been sent out. David Taylor has stood down but Nick Taylor has put himself forward as a replacement. Isobel Swift will be on maternity leave and has put forward a colleague, Edward Seymour, as her replacement. A replacement is still needed for David Brookshaw. B&H LAF have been approached.
- **Buriton Public Inquiry:** RM fed back info on the Buriton Rail Crossing public inquiry. He was disappointed that Network Rail was allowed to introduce new evidence at the inquiry to which objectors were unable fully respond. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the Inspector's Decision was to allow the closure of the crossing and extinguishment of the right of way.
- **Annual Report:** The [Annual Report](#) will now run from Jan-Dec and the latest report is available online.
- **AGM:** The next meeting on 25 April 2017 will be the AGM. The election of the Chairman and Vice Chairman will take place. RM asked Members to let Allison know if anyone was interested to put themselves forward

11. Defra and Natural England business - SDLAF report to Defra (Roger Mullenger)

Natural England are preparing a LAF conference on 21 March which will be in Birmingham. NE are seeking agenda items. There are 2 places available – please let Allison know if you are interested in attending. Travel expenses will be paid.

ACTION 12: SDLAF members to let Allison Thorpe know if they are interested in attending the NW LAF conference in March.

12. Reports from other LAFS(Roger Mullenger)

Alan Marlow from Hampshire LAF reported from their last meeting where they discussed the status of the 5 sections of the English Coast Path which are in Hampshire. They also discussed: the List of Streets, Byways; creating a better dialogue between the ROW/ Countryside service and the 9 planning authorities in Hampshire; and are working with the ramblers to help them to undertake full survey of ROW and furniture on ROW in Hampshire.

Tricia Butcher from West Sussex LAF reported from their meeting in January where Peter Phillips from Highways England talked about the A27 at Chichester, Arundel and Worthing and Lancing, and Jon Perks from WSCC spoke about a public paths consultation.

13. SDNPA update (Allison Thorpe)

AT updated the group on the SDLAF survey results and thanked all SDLAF members for the 100% response rate. The results help identify what we were doing well as well as raising key points, including putting guest speakers earlier on the agenda and ensuring all views were taken into account.

AT encouraged SDLAF members to sign up to the newsletter for updates on the work of the SDNPA and also to contribute to the newsletter.

Andrew Lee updated the group on the proposed sell-off of land by Local Authorities. The SDNPA is working very hard to prevent any sell off of land within the Park. BHCC has held off the sale but Eastbourne is still ongoing. AL asked SDLAF members to ensure they fed back into any consultations and let the Local Authorities know their views on any proposed sell off of land.

Forthcoming SDLAF Meeting Dates: 25 April 2017

ACTION LIST – SDLAF 21 October 2016:

ACTION 1: RJ and AT will draft a response to the Busses bill consultation.

ACTION 2: AT to follow up conditions on Stocks Lane on the Meon Valley Trail with HCC highways and report back to SDLAF.

ACTION 3: AG will report back to SDLAF from February Logical Framework workshop for National Trails on 20 Feb. **SO** to put on the next agenda.

ACTION 4: SDLAF to prepare response to the England Coast Path consultation later in the year.

ACTION 5: RM to draft letter to highways authorities in the park to get clarification on what they are doing in relation to unsealed highways and what their actions are on their lists of streets.

ACTION 6: SO to add to agenda to discuss at next meeting

ACTION 7: RM to draft a letter to landowners regarding Permissive Paths for approval from sub group before sending out. **Sub Group** to contact local Rambler groups to ask for feedback on permissive paths in their area.

ACTION 8: SO to aid the Permissive Paths sub group in agreeing a date for next meeting

ACTION 9: GJ to report back to the National Trust that the SDLAF agreed that they strongly support the Devils Dyke proposed path and that it will add value to the National Trail.

ACTION 10: SDLAF to write a letter in support of the Devil's Dyke Path Project plan

ACTION 11: SDLAF members to feed back any comments on the SDNPA Cycling and Walking Strategy to Alister Linton-Crook

ACTION 12: SDLAF members to let Allison Thorpe know if they are interested in attending the NW LAF conference in March.